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SIX SERMONS,

PREACHED IN

CHARLOTTE CHAPEL,

EDINBURGH,

BY THE

REVEREND SYDNEY SMITH, A. M.

AND FELLOW OF NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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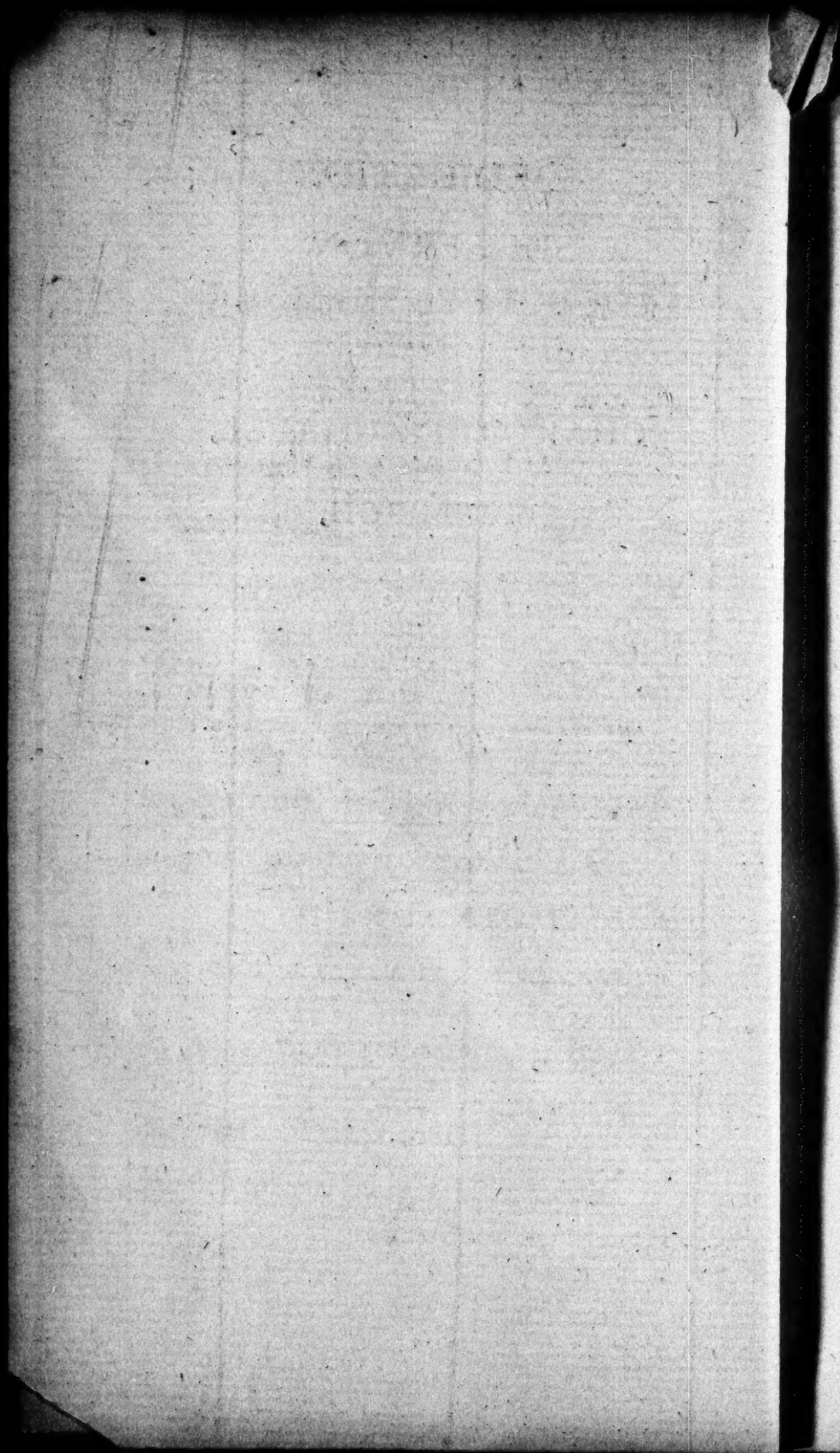
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DEDICATION
TO
LORD WEBB SEYMOUR.

MY LORD,

I DEDICATE these few Sermons to you, as a slight token of my great regard, and respect; because I know no man who, in spite of the disadvantages of high birth, lives to more honourable, and commendable purposes than yourself. I am,

MY LORD,

Your most sincere wellwisher,

SYDNEY SMITH.

IMMIGRATION

LORD WILKINSON

MY LORD,

I dedicate these few
sermons to you, as a slight to-
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self. I am,

MY LORD,

Your most sincere wellwisher,

STEWART

PREFACE.

I WROTE these Sermons in the exercise of my profession, to do good ; and for the same reason I make them public : That they cannot do much, I am well aware, because they are hasty, and imperfect specimens of an unpopular species of composition. Some little good, however, they may do ; and why should I give way to an immoral vanity, and do nothing in my vo-

education, because I cannot do much?

The sum of public opinion is made up of the sentiments, as the sum of public revenue is, from the contributions of individuals; and we become a rich, or a prudent nation, by adding together many trifling quotas of wisdom and of gold.

The worst motives will, of course, be attributed to me by those who read my political observations, and differ from me in opinion; and I shall be supposed to have felt a lit-

tle for that *ancient privilege of discrimination*, which, it may be presumed, would not be very highly respected in all the changes, and chances of a regenerated kingdom. Be it so. Let those who are actuated by the motive, be deterred by the imputation. As long as God gives me life, and strength, I will never cease to attack, in the way of my profession, and to the best of my abilities, any system of principles injurious to the public happiness, whether they be sanctioned

by the voice of the many, or whether they be not; and may the same God take that unworthy life away, whenever I shrink from the contempt, and misrepresentation to which my duty shall call me to submit.

ERRATA.

For *like*, p. 11. line 1. read *likely*.

For *reflections*, p. 123. line 1. read *reflections*.

Entered in Stationers Hall.

ERRATA

For line p. 11. line 1. read "and"
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Entered in Stationers Hall.

ON THE
LOVE OF OUR COUNTRY.

PSALM CXXXvii. v. 1.

By the waters of Babylon, we sat down and
wept, when we remembered thee, Oh
Sion!

THIS beautiful Psalm was written
in commemoration of the Baby-
lonish captivity, written, if we may
judge, from the lively feelings it
exhibits, soon after the period of
that memorable event; and, in
truth, it is not possible to read it

without emotion : It tells a tale of sorrow with that simple melancholy which the heart can only feel, and the imagination never counterfeit : They hung up their harps on the willow trees, they could not sing the songs of their God, for they were in captivity, and heaviness of spirit oppressed them ; they thought of their country, and sat down by the waters of Babylon to weep.

Whence, it may be asked, does this love of our country, this universal passion, proceed ? Why does

the eye ever dwell with fondness upon the scenes of infant life? Why do we breathe with greater joy the breath of our youth? Why are not other soils as grateful, and other heavens as serene? Why does the soul of man ever cling to that earth where it first knew pleasure and pain, and under the rough discipline of the passions was roused to the dignity of moral life? Is it only that our country contains our kindred and our friends? And is it nothing but a name for our social affections? It cannot be this; the most friendless of human beings has

a country which he admires and extols, and which he would, in the same circumstances, prefer to all others under heaven. Tempt him with the fairest face of nature, place him by living waters, under shadowy cedars of Lebanon, open to his view all the gorgeous allurements of the climates of the sun; he will love the rocks and deserts of his childhood better than all these, and thou canst not bribe his soul to forget the land of his nativity; he will sit down and weep by the waters of Babylon, when he remembers thee, oh Sion.

But whether from this love of our kindred, or from habit, or from association, or from whatever more simple principle of our nature this love of our country proceed, it is of the highest importance to society that its existence should be cherished, and its energy directed aright ; and if the duties which regulate the conduct of man to man be fit subjects for discussion in this place, that virtue which is founded upon the relation between societies, and individuals, and includes the important and extended interests of a whole people, must, in

preference to all others, merit discussion on my part, and attention on yours.

An attempt is often made to distinguish between moral and Christian subjects of investigation ; but no subject can be moral which is not Christian. Christianity guides us to another world, by showing us how to act in this ; in precepts more or less general, it enacts and limits every human duty ; the world is the theatre where we are to show whether we are Christians in profession or in deed ; and there is no

action of our lives, which concerns the interests of others, in which we do not either violate or obey a Christian law. I cannot, therefore, illustrate a moral duty, without, at the same time, enforcing a precept of our religion.

The love of our country has, in the late scenes which have been acted in the world, been so often made a pretext for bad ambition, and so often given birth to crude and ignorant violence, that many good men entertain no very great relish for the virtue, and some

are, in truth, tired and disgusted with the very name of it ; but this mode of thinking, though very natural and very common, is, above all others, that which goes to perpetuate error in the world. If good men are to cherish in secret the ideas, that any theory of duties we owe to our country is romantic and absurd, because bad men and foolish men have made it an engine of crime, or found it a source of error ; if there is to be this constant action and reaction between extreme opinions ; why then the sentiments of mankind must be in e-

ternal vibration between one error and another, and can never rest upon the middle point of truth. Let it be our pride to derive our principles, not from times and circumstances, but from reason and religion, and to struggle against that mixture of indolence and virtue which condemns the use, because it will not discriminate the abuse, which it abhors. In spite of the prostitution of this venerable name, there is, and there ever will be, a Christian patriotism, a great system of duties which man owes to the sum of human beings with whom he

lives : to deny it is folly ; to neglect it is crime.

The love of our country has been ridiculed by some modern enthusiasts, as too narrow a field for the benevolence of an enlightened mind ; they are for comprehending the whole human race in our affections, and deem any partiality shown to the particular country in which we happen to be born, as a narrow and unphilosophical preference. Now, it would be difficult to say, whether complete selfishness, or universal philanthropy,

is the most like to mislead us from that sound practical goodness, in which the beauty of Christianity, and the merit of a Christian, consist. Our sphere of thoughts has hardly any limits, our sphere of action hardly any extent; we may speculate on worlds, we must act in families, in districts, and in kingdoms; and if we contract a distaste for the good we can do, because it is not equal to the good we can conceive, what is this but to sacrifice deeds to words, and to rule our lives by maxims of the most idle and ostentatious sentiment? How can the re-

mote corners of the earth be influenced by your benevolence? Here are thousands at home whom your generosity may aid, and your wisdom teach, and your example guide; leave the task of superintendence to Providence; and if you really wish to promote the universal good, you cannot do it more effectually than by fulfilling with cheerfulness and activity your humble and subdivided lot. Oh Jerusalem, says our Saviour, Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, how often would I have gathered thy children toge-

ther, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! Who would not believe that our Saviour himself felt, at the moment of this exclamation, that ardent love of his country, which it is the object of this modern doctrine to attack and deride?

One of the first passions by which the imagination of an able and a good youth is inflamed, is the love of his country ; and he generally manages it in such a manner, as to convert it into a venial error rather than a virtue ; I

say venial, because those errors which proceed from the good and generous dispositions of youth, deserve indulgence, and are seldom perpetuated but when they are treated with harshness. All the splendid actions performed in popular governments, give a very early bias to the mind; the perusal of them forms the most material part of education; there is nothing which ranges youthful fancy on the side of government, and every thing which ranges it against it; there is very little to feed the imagination in the idea that men must be

restrained, and protected (above all things) from their own madness and folly; that they must be cheated and threatened into their own good: but a very little warmth and elevation of thought will convert all the necessary operations of the best governments into crimes. Contribution is extortion, punishment is cruelty, management and prudence are duplicity, and restraint is slavish subjugation; and hence, in the young, patriotism is often little else than an universal suspicion, and abuse of all government whatsoever. Many have the good

fortune to outgrow this childish propensity; in others it is fixed for life, and exhibits instances of the most painful and deplorable waste of talents.

If such be the errors of the young, the faults of those more conversant with the world are, I am afraid, of a less favourable complexion. Whatever virtues may increase with age, the virtue of patriotism is not amongst the number. It is in truth a matter of some wonder, that so many men of irreproachable honesty in private life, should be so

totally devoid of public virtue; nay, they are not only devoid of it in practice, but in theory. Every sneer against the duties we owe to the public is received with complacency, and considered as proceeding from a thorough knowledge of life, and mankind; and to talk seriously of the love of our country, is political artifice or youthful declamation. Nor are these public sins at all infamous in the eyes of the world: Men of undoubted guilt move in the same circles they moved before, and with increased consideration, if their crimes

are upon a large scale, and they have bartered morality for a dignified price.

My brethren, Whence is this? Decided and immediate infamy follows treason to individual trust. When *one* man suffers from fraud and injustice, every honest heart is up in arms. Is dishonesty less dishonesty because the number of the sufferers is increased, and the evil subdivided amongst a whole country? The limits of private fraud are narrow, and its effects of no long duration. Public dishonesty may en-

tail misery upon a whole people, and the unborn infant may suffer for the laxity and corruption of preceding times. Has our Saviour given us such strict rules for our conduct to each other, and left us to the free exercise of every bad and licentious passion when we sin only against the public? Is it against narrow and partial crimes that he has threatened the wrath of God, and flung open the doors of heaven to magnificent villany and boundless pollution? My brethren, he who sins against the public, has no true religion of God;

he has no honour, which is the religion of the world; he abstains from crimes against individuals, because he knows that loss of reputation is loss of interest, and gives loose to his baseness when profit invites, and impunity permits; if he lived in worse times, he would defraud his neighbour, he would forfeit his word; his pretended virtues are maxims of convenience; he has no guardian conscience, no protecting principle; there waves not in his breast that flaming sword which turns every way to drive off that

which is evil, and to guard the path to the tree of life.

These remarks have often been made as arguments for political change. Can I wish for political change? the sound is mournful to my mind. Can I wish that more gallant English, Christian men, should fall? Can I wish that more good families should be made wretched, that tears should break forth again on all faces? Do I wish to see again the ancients and counsellors of the earth, dignified and learned men, looking to me for

charity, and eating before my face the slender bread of exile and affliction? Can I wish to unhappy Europe (which sees now, perhaps, the green branch of peace), can I wish her fresh sorrow, and that the battle be carried on for seven other years, with the noise of the warrior, and with garments rolled in blood? No, it is not for political change I wish; it is moral and religious change for which I am pleading; I am intreating you to hold yourselves as accountable to God and your conscience, in every public as in every private transac-

tion of your lives; to perform those duties which may affect the country at large, with the same delicate and inflexible justice you would exhibit, on ordinary occasions, and not to be base, because you can be base with impunity. These are the points I am pressing upon your attention. I would have you probe to the quick, every the least motive to public fraud and to public corruption, even though the wrong you do should be divided and subdivided amongst millions and millions of people. Oh God, says the prophet King, who shall enter in-

to thy holy tabernacle? Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart.

It is impossible, in the short compass of an address from the pulpit, to attempt any thing like a methodical classification of the various duties we owe to our country. Those which are the most frequently neglected, or the least frequently insisted upon, are all on which I shall pretend to touch.

There is a crime committed against the country, in times of its

adversity, which I confess appears to me to be of the most fordid and selfish nature; that men who derive not only protection, but opulence, from a country in the days of its prosperity, should, upon any appearance of alarm, be ever ready to retire with person and property to other countries, is a principle subversive of all political union whatsoever. What nation could exist for a moment, if, in the day of danger and war, when the kingdoms were gathered together against her, she saw her treasures dispersed, and her children fled? Are we not all

linked together by language, by birth, by habits, by opinions, by virtues, for worse, for better, for glory, for shame, for peace, for war, for plenty, for want? Will you shudder to interweave your destiny with the destiny of your country? And can you possibly think of your own security when your land is weary, and fainting because of her great afflictions? And when all whom you know and love can die and suffer, would you alone live and rejoice? If I forget thee, Oh Jerusalem! let my right hand forget her cunning: If I do not re-

member thee in the time of my trouble, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.

My brethren, it is sometimes good to be content with doing a little; the great and splendid occasions in which a man can benefit his country are few; the humble duties by which her benefit may be advanced are of daily occurrence; such, among others, is the duty of example: it is not enough to ascertain that actions be innocent as to ourselves, they must be innocent as to the effect they

produce upon others; the consequences of some levity or omission to you may be unimportant; but they are not unimportant to those who are guilty of the same thing, because you are, and will be guilty of it with far other talents, other habits, and other dispositions, than yourself. This kind of patriotism is, I am afraid, rare enough; indeed, men great in talents and rank, found somewhat of their reputation upon not doing what the rest of the world do, by which the one would have their superior talents inferred, and the other their

superior condition. Such, I am afraid, is the unworthy shame of being thought capable of attending to minutiae, which robs us of the invaluable benefit of example.

I cannot conclude this subject of love to our country, without animadverting to that species of it, which consists in a firm and spirited combination against the unjust aggression, and dangerous insolence of a foreign power ; and in all the history of successful resistance to outrageous tyranny (a short and beautiful page in the annals of

man), there is no instance more marked, and more illustrious, than that which this empire has so recently displayed to the world. Permit me rapidly to survey the perils through which we have passed; it cannot but promote a spirit of piety amongst us, and increase our confidence in the protection of God.

The whole force of the most powerful people in Europe was guided to our destruction by exquisite talents, unshackled from the fear of God or man. Their

warlike spirit was blown into an enthusiasm, which Mahomet could never kindle in his savage Arabians, when he came forth, like these modern fanatics, to blot out the name of Christ, and to dim the glory of Christendom; onwards they went, deceiving the simple, and conquering the brave; bringing to their foes death, to their friends freedom worse than death; but plundering, insulting, and confounding all: Men's hearts were melted in the midst of them; there was neither council nor conduct in Europe; a deep-seated earth-

quake seemed to heave up the basis of civil life, and the tribunals of men, and the thrones of monarchs, and the temples of God, shook to the lowest atom of their structure. What was the firm, and dignified, and manly conduct of this country? we stood up for human happiness, and spurning from us the luxuries of peace, unfurled a banner to the nations, under which the good, and the honourable, and the wise, might range; and with as much moderation as security would permit, and with as much courage as man could dis-

play, through internal disaffection, and through mutiny, and through open rebellion, and through two awful visitations of famine, for seven long years, we have maintained this great fight, till now at length the pride of our enemy is abated, and his devices confounded; confounded by our magnanimity in doing and suffering, by the intrepid wisdom of those men who sway our national councils, by the pity of Almighty God; for if God had not pitied us, we, like the poor unhappy strangers within our gates, should have been living broken-

hearted, in foreign lands, upon the bread of tears, and in the garb of charity, and our families, which now live together in peace and unity, would have been scattered abroad far and near, never upon this earth to meet again.

My brethren, let this dreadful idea awaken in your minds a lively gratitude to Heaven. Think seriously of the time yet left to you for salvation ; amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men. So may the blessings of God still be heaped on the

heads of our people, this evil time shall pass away, we shall see golden days after our long tribulations; the arts of peace, and the spirit of order, will revive upon the earth, and every man will live under the shadow of his vine, and his fig-tree; there will be no complaining, no leading to captivity, in our streets; we shall not be driven to a foreign land; nor will it ever be our fate to sit down and weep by the waters of Babylon, when we remember thee, Oh Sion!

bread of our people, this evil time
 shall pass away, we shall be glad
 days after, our long tribulations;
 the word of peace, and the spirit
 of order, will rest upon the earth,
 and a way man shall find under the
 shadow of his wing, and his life
 tree, there will be no complaint,
 again leading to captivity, in our
 midst; we shall not be driven to
 a foreign land; nor will it ever be
 our lot to sit down and weep by
 the waters of Babylon; when we
 remember thee, O Lord, in our
 prayer, we will say, our iniquities
 are as filthy rags, and we are all
 as unclean; we have been as filthy

ON SCEPTICISM.

PSALM XXXi. v. 20.

Let the lying lips be put to silence, which
cruelly, disdainfully, and maliciously, speak
against the righteous.

To neglect those floating imputa-
tions and popular calumnies, which
are in circulation against any sys-
tem either moral, religious, or po-
litical, appears to me rather mag-
nanimous than wise, and to favour
more of a generous contempt for
danger, than of prudent precau-

tion against it. Bold assertions and specious invectives often repeated, begin at last to be credited; we hear the calumny so often united to its object, that the mention of the one, almost mechanically introduces the notion of the other; and we are betrayed into dangerous prejudices, rather by a principle of association, than a decision of the judgment.

There is too, besides, a fashion in thinking as in every thing else, and the giddy part of mankind must appear in the newest philosophy,

and the most admired system of ethics or depravity, which the day has to exhibit. In an age of devotion, they lead in hypocrisy, regulate the punctilios of supplication, and adjust all the modes, and minutiae of piety. In an age of philosophy, they are the first to disbelieve in the immortality of the soul, to discredit the evidence of their senses, and to doubt, discredit, and deride every thing else, which the rules of fashionable scepticism may permit, or require.

If there be any truth in this,

and if the world be led to such unreasonable conclusions from such unreasonable causes, it is important to remark the modes of thinking of the times, and to select for animadversion, those trite but prevailing opinions which endanger the well-being of society.

* The number of those who dis-

* I confess these theologico-political sceptics, or the worst and most noisy of them, have always appeared to me to be animated by the spirit of Benedictine, or Franciscan friars, to be mere monks of atheism, and democracy. I see the same stupid blindness,

believe in Christianity, and who openly avow that disbelief, is great, and I believe increasing : Men of this stamp, in quitting the religion in which they have been educated, have certainly made no partial abjuration of its tenets ; the charity and moderation which it inculcates, have shared the fate of all its other principles, and every trace of them is most thoroughly effaced.

the same extravagant zeal, the same malicious cruelty, characterize the theological tonsure of one age, and the political tonsure of another.

It is a leading object with these men, to bring into disrepute the character of Christianity, of its teachers and adherents; and one mode by which they effect it is, by attaching to all mention of these various subjects, the ideas of intolerance, bigotry, and narrowness of mind. The opposite virtues they ascribe to their own sect, as candour, liberality, the spirit of discussion, and an exemption from every human prejudice; and such (as I have before remarked) are the effects of invective, and assertion frequently repeated, that those

who have not formed to themselves precise notions of what these operative terms imply, and who have not learned the necessity of ascertaining their due application by a steady appeal to facts, are apt to admit both the justice of the imputations which this sect of philosophers make, and of the pretensions to which they aspire.

To the youthful, every thing which appears open, and generous, is so agreeable, every thing which conveys the idea of narrowness, concealment, or deceit, is so ob-

noxious, that they literally become ashamed of their religion, and feel abashed at their faith, before these men of liberal sentiment and extended inquiry.

It is very easy to see the pernicious consequences to which this will lead; the horror which a young man of that age feels, is the horror of being unknown, and unadmired; he cannot wait to think of distant consequences, the eclat of disbelief is too tempting for him, and he becomes a deist; a little time elapses, and from the same

vanity of extending (or appearing to extend) investigation, he begins to call in question a superintending Providence, and a sense of right and wrong; and descending through a long train of theories and systems, from bad to worse, he subsides into a state of complete scepticism upon every question whatsoever. Is this to be seen without affliction? A young man standing on the threshold of life, and just going into all the business of the world with a heart in which every principle of right, and wrong is thoroughly shaken and impaired?

If not destined for great offices in public life, yet he is a brother, a son, a friend ; he is to be a husband, and a father of children ; some must trust him, and some must love him. Call it bigotry, and cover these notions with mockery and derision ; but I say it would be better for this young man, that the work of death were going on within him, that the strength, and the roses of his youth were fading away, and that he were waisting down to the tombs of his ancestors, wept by his friends, and pitied by the world.

If such then be their pernicious effects, let us examine on what foundation these high-minded pretences rest, and whether there be any set of men who have a right to consider themselves as so far advanced beyond their fellow-creatures in the spirit of wisdom, and to look down upon the rest of mankind with anger, and contempt.

In speaking of those who disbelieve in Christianity, I am very far from including in my observations every person of this description.

The truth of Christianity rests upon its own internal evidence, and the evidence of history. It is impossible to account for the aberrations of human reason ; evidence of the strongest kind is daily excepted to by men of unquestionable talents, and sincerity ; to us the proofs of the truth of our religion appear manifest, and strong ; that they shall not appear so to others is certainly possible, because every irrational conclusion is possible.

Whoever has examined the ques-

tion with that candid and investigating spirit which its extreme importance demands; whoever respects, with an amiable and principled modesty, the common belief of mankind on this topic, however it may differ from his own particular persuasion; whoever would rather conceal what he considers to be an exemption from prejudice, and a proof of superior talent in himself, than weaken any one religious restraint, or impair any one virtuous principle in the bosom of any one human being; whoever believes it is possible for

a Christian to be thoroughly impressed with the truth of his religion, without forfeiting all pretensions to sincerity, to talent, and to learning; against such a man I am not now lifting up my voice; may God enlighten his darkness, and convert his heart! But it is that sect of men I am endeavouring to single out, who, in all the common intercourse of life, obtrude upon you their blasphemy, and their scepticism, who pant to tell you they have no God; and are restless till they have convinced you they have trampled under

foot every pleasant hope, and every decent restriction in life; who think that a few silly pleasantries, and slender arguments, are a sufficient preparation to decide on these proofs of a future life; men who (while they think they have monopolized all liberal sentiment and acute inquiry) have made a faction in morals, who are persecuting in their toleration, bigotted in their liberality, and furious in their moderation. These are the men who have made the very name of philosophy a term of reproach; who have been the cause, that the

plea of liberality cannot now be heard without a sneer of suspicion ; these are they, who have destroyed, in the mass of mankind, all veneration for the labours of speculative wisdom ; who have really put back the world, and diminished every rational hope of improvement ; and by bringing the whole healing art into disrepute, have made men cleave to their ulcers, and their pains, and shudder at the hand which is held out to offer them relief.

In their depreciation of religion,

and the religious, these sectaries make a very copious use of history ; they can from thence show, that there was a period when men were utterly debarred from all freedom of opinion upon religious subjects, when this intolerance was manifested in the most cruel persecutions, by an artful, and ambitious priesthood, who governed, and who pillaged the world.

These facts may be true ; but they do not justify the inferences which are drawn from them. If every thing is to be considered as

bad in itself which is capable of being abused ; liberty, wealth, learning, and power, ought rather to be the objects of our aversion than our choice. Every good principle has been at times perverted ; every good institution has been gradually elaborated from the sufferings and afflictions of the world : man, doubly wretched, slowly toils on to perfection, earning his bread by the sweat of his brow, and his wisdom by the sorrows of his heart.

But what, it may be asked, have these historical imputations, these

invectives of rolls and records, to
 do with the principle and practice
 of the present day; a day in which
 the pretensions of every class of
 men are kept in due bounds by
 the enlightened condition of all,
 and every one is left to worship
 God according to his own ideas of
 truth? The object is not to show
 what establishments have been,
 and what Christianity has been, in
 dark ages, but to show the natural
 spirit, and tendency of both. If it
 can be shown that there is any
 thing in the Christian religion ne-
 cessarily connected with bigotry,

and intolerance, to this objection would be pertinent, and powerful; but to suppose that a Christian is a bigot now, because there were very few Christians who were not so three hundred years ago, is to suppose the existence of principles and causes, which every cool, unprejudiced mind perceives to have long ago lost their influence upon mankind. We have nothing to do but to make this malicious anachronism more general, and we shall say, that natural philosophy is conjecture, the medical art empiricism, and law a system of inge-

nious depredation, because there have been periods in which these sciences were all exposed to such imputations.

The fact is (and such I believe to be the opinion of every man who loves truth more than party, let his religious opinions be what they may), that a disbelief, not only in Christianity, but in a superintending Providence, is fast travelling down from the cell of the metaphysician to the common haunts, and ordinary scenes of life; that men are giving up the prac-

tical morality of the gospel, and the true and wholesome terror of a God, who have no beautiful, and classical theory of morals to substitute in its place, but who, if they are not Christians, must be wild beasts. These are the dangers which now threaten us ; we have not at present to fear that we shall be manacled by superstition, but that the golden chain which reaches from heaven to earth, should be broken in sunder, and not one link of it again be found.

If philosophy be a love of know-

ledge, evinced by an ardent and able pursuit of it, there can surely be nothing to exclude the firm believer in Christianity from every honourable distinction which this appellation can convey. The subject which engages his attention, is unquestionably superior in importance to every other which can engage the wit of man. The prosecution of it involves wide historical research, much curious, and delicate examination of evidence, much labour, and many vigils of the mind; and he who gets up from these studies a sincere Christian, is, for

ought I know, as much a philosopher as the hoary atheist who has studied away his soul, has elaborated his theory of annihilation from whole libraries, and given up one life to discover there is no other.

A great many human beings must take their religion upon trust; few have leisure, and few talents for speculative inquiries; but let me ask, which is the more commendable and noble? To believe in Christianity without proof, or to disbelieve in it without proof? A

modest coincidence with received opinions above our faculties, or an affected contempt of them? Whether there is a more disgusting spectacle than arrogant mediocrity? Whether we cannot more easily allow for that inclination which bends towards a religion of comfortable promise, than that which leans to a system of cold despondency? Whether there is not something pleasant in seeing our fellow-creatures cling to a faith which arranges the world, and cheers it? And if it is not afflicting to behold that depraved appetite for misery

and despair, which induces men to yield up their assent to a system of incredulity, without being acquainted in the smallest degree with the reasons on which it is founded?

Those who are so fond of preferring the charge of bigotry against the Christians, should remember how intimately this attachment to our opinions is interwoven in our constitution, and how much more likely it is to display itself upon subjects of such extreme importance as that of religion; whoever has made Christianity his rule of

action in this world, and his hope in the next, whose original conviction has been strengthened by habit, and warmed by devotion, and can bear in this tenor of mind, to hear that he has been believing in a fable, that his labour is lost, and his hope illusive; whoever can bear to hear these assertions, and to discuss them without transgressing the rules of candour, possesses the love of truth in a degree truly inimitable, for he risks all his happiness in pursuit of it.

But if, in spite of this plea of

mitigation, the want of candour is so offensive in a Christian, what shall we say to that most extraordinary of all characters, a bigotted sceptic? who resists the force of proof where he has every temptation to be convinced, who ought to sigh for refutation, and to bless the man who has reasoned him to silence? Bigotry in him is the pure unadulterated vice; it is not the fear of losing an opinion on which his happiness depends, but the fear of losing an opinion, merely because it is an opinion; and this is the very essence of obstinacy and pride.

Where men pretend to nothing, the world are indulgent to their faults; but it well behoves those who lord it in word and thought over the rest of mankind, that they be consistent in their conduct, and perfectly free from those faults which they so liberally impute to others. Ignorance, bigotry, and illiberality, are bad enough in their simple state; but when men of slender information, narrow views, and obstinate dispositions, insult the feelings, and despise the understandings, of such of their fellow-creatures who have fixed their faith

in an amiable and benevolent religion, we are called upon by common sense, and by common spirit, to resist, and to extinguish this dynasty of fools.

To those great men on whom God has breathed a larger portion of his spirit, and sent into the world to enlarge the empire of talents, and of truth, mankind will ever pay a loyal obedience ; they are our natural leaders, they are the pillars of fire which brighten the darkness of the night, and make straight the paths of the wilderness, they

must move on before us; but while we give loose to our natural veneration for great talents, let us not mistake laxity for liberality, the indelicate boldness of a forward disposition, for the grasping strength and impulsive curiosity of an original mind; let us steadily discountenance the efforts of bad men, and of shallow men, to darken the distinctions between right, and wrong; to bring into ridicule, and contempt, the religion of their country; and to gratify some popular talent at the expence of the dearest interests of mankind.

Bigotry, and intolerance are their terms of alarm; and some foundation for alarm, in truth, there may be; but the danger is, not that the world should again fall under the dominion of men who will dictate a peculiar belief, but of men who will prohibit all belief, who will enforce incredulity with monastic rigour, and annex a papal infallibility to the decisions of the sceptical school. The danger is, that having escaped from one age of darkness, where nothing was called in question, we shall fall into another, where every thing is discussed;

that having reduced the power of one order of men who would have hindered us from doubting, we shall have to struggle with another who would hinder us from deciding; that the fires of persecution may be lighted up to support an orthodox phynonism, and to check the heresy of piety; and that any positive belief in any religion, may be just as criminal in the nineteenth century, as to doubt of the real presence, or any other catholic dogma, was in the eleventh.

To that small, but invaluable

class of men who have steadily kept down the natural tendency to violence, and who have such an exquisite tact for truth, that they can extract it pure from the fury and misrepresentation of all parties, are we to look for our barrier against the danger with which we appear to be threatened. To such men, this madness of incredulity, and lust of doubt, will be a matter of uniform resistance, and profound regret ; they will know that the path assigned to human reason, though lofty, is limited, and they will fight over her present excess, as well as

her original imbecility; as the steady friends of human nature, they will never believe that the cause of real improvement is advanced by men who are neither profound in the theory of religion, nor pure in its practice; against such men they will bend the brow, and shut the heart, and exert the real authority they possess in the world, " To put to silence the lips which cruelly, disdainfully, and despitefully, speak against the righteous."

and originality in the study
of the human mind, they will
never believe in the power of
any cause is advanced by men
who are neither wise nor
strong of mind, but who are
strong of body. The power of
the mind is the power of the
heart and the soul, and they
will enter the realm of truth
and enter the world. To put to
the test the world, they
will enter the world, they
will enter the world, they
will enter the world.

THE POOR MAGDALENE.

PREACHED BEFORE THE SCOTCH MAGDA-
LENE SOCIETY.

LUKE, chap. vii. v. 48.

Daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee.

THE little narrative of which this text is a part, presents so beautiful a picture of profound sorrow, and virtuous humiliation, that I am sure you will excuse me, if I give it you more in detail.

Behold a woman in the city,

which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat, stood behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment; and he turned to the woman, and said to Simon, " Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with her tears, and dried them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased

to kiss my feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my head with ointment. Daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee."

There is something in the sorrow of this poor, unknown woman, which is touching and sublime.

A delicate spirit, abashed with the wisdom and purity of Jesus, a lowliness which forbade lamentation, a remorse which precluded hope, a heart broken with public scorn, and inward shame. She said nothing, she had no hope of mercy,

or dream of salvation, for her soul ;
 but giving a loose to that enthusi-
 asm for the good, from which the
 worst of our species are not wholly
 exempt ; and remembering, per-
 haps, the days when she was inno-
 cent and happy ; she never ceases
 to wash the feet of Jesus with her
 tears, and to dry them with the
 hairs of her head.

Jesus did not reject this poor crea-
 ture ; he forgave her sins ; and you
 bless the mercy of your Saviour.
 Bear then in mind this picture, and
 imitate that mercy which you love.

The poor women in whose behalf I am this day to plead, present themselves before you with the deepest shame, and the most profound contrition: they are fully sensible of their unworthiness; they would kiss the ground on which you tread; they would wash your feet with their tears: have mercy on them, for they are wretched; and if you cannot forgive their sins, at least alleviate their sorrows.

Before I enter at length upon this subject, it may be necessary to state to you, that the principal ob-

ject with the Society, now called the Magdalene Society, is to reclaim unhappy, and deluded females from a vicious course of life, to inure them to habits of industry, to reconcile them to their families, and restore them to a sense of religion. It is nearly two years since this Society was first founded ; and during that time forty-four women have been admitted to the benefit of the institution. You will be curious to know the result, and I will lay it before you with the greatest candour. In some women the habits of vice have been found so

deeply fixed, that it was not possible to eradicate them ; such have of course been dismissed from the asylum, though by no means wholly abandoned : The salvation of a fellow-creature has been always deemed by those who superintend this institution, as much too sacred an object to be given up, while activity could suggest a single effort, which reason could sanction.

But I have the greatest pleasure in assuring you, that the cares of the Society have been eminently successful in by far the greatest

number of instances; and that many poor women who would (but for this) have dragged on a wretched and ignominious life, have been reconciled to their parents, received into reputable families as servants, and placed, by a sense of their past misery, and present comfort, beyond the rational probability of relapse. There are at present twenty women in the house; and the frequent application for admission, from the most miserable objects possible, which the contracted state of their funds have compelled the the Society to reject, has occasion-

ed this appeal to the charity of the public.

It must not be dissembled, that there are some respectable, and well-meaning people unfavourable to this institution, from a conception that it encourages vice; that women, who have so far forgot every principle of virtue, ought to be abandoned to their fate; and that to take so lively an interest in the situation, and circumstances of such depraved characters, is neither proper in itself, nor encouraging to those who are virtuous, and good.

But if it were true, that a facility to escape from the miseries of vice, operates as an inducement to crime, are we wholly to exclude all consideration for the individual sufferer, and render wretchedness coeval with life, for the sake of public example? Vice does not originate from computation of probabilities, and accurate adjustment of future good, and evil, but from ignorance, weak notions of duty, bad government of the mind, and dangerous situation.

Let us advert to the real facts.

A poor young creature, allured from the country, perhaps, by idle dreams of wealth, and ambition, is placed in the middle of a large town; far removed from her parents, and her friends, and exposed to every temptation which the most infamous artifices can suggest. Bad must he be indeed, who would think to palliate a crime here in the face of God, and the people; but feeling, as I do, most deeply for the poor women, whose cause I have undertaken, it is my duty to bring to your remembrance, those circumstances which fixed their ill-

fated destiny, and made them what they are, the daughters of affliction ; degraded ; suppliants to God, and man.

It is no imaginary picture I paint to you, but the crimes of real life. I repeat again, that the most atrocious artifices are daily put in practice against the lower class of women, and by men in whom religion, education, and rank in life, ought to have infused far other principles of honour, dignity, and compassion ; who, besides all other considerations, ought to know, that

he who sacrifices the innocence of a woman, who looks up to her character, and her labour for honest support, gives up a human creature to want, and to crime, to untimely depravity, and to early death.

The tender age of many of these poor creatures, is a circumstance which pleads powerfully to your compassion. The necessary sacrifice of prudence to poverty, is the source of many vices, as it ought to be of much indulgence to the lower classes of mankind. At the very period when the child requires

most the advice, and vigilance of the mother, she is compelled to quit her home for new and dangerous scenes, and is left to her own fatal guidance, at the most perilous moment of life. There are women in this Society of fifteen and sixteen years of age, fit objects truly of that pious compassion they have moved, and that fatherly protection they have received. Thus, while the human body slowly toils on to its last stature, and the soul late unfolds its power, and its might, every bad passion is swift to increase, and before nature has fi-

nished her work, vice has sunk it to decay.

You feel less pity for these women, perhaps, because you associate to their former life, riot, extravagance, and mad luxury; rather associate to it the feelings of infamy, of hunger, of remorse, of houseless, friendless, and unpitied want. The sufferings of the respectable poor are bad enough; but if you will fathom to the lowest the misery of our nature, look to the union of poverty, and vice. Behold the dying prostitute, so joyous once, and

so innocent, and so good, behold her in some dismal recess of a crowded city, slowly yielding up her life to sorrow, and to pain. So lies this poor forgotten creature, without the blessing of parents, or the voice of kinsmen, or the sweet counsel of friends; and when you see her face pale with weakness, and her limbs withered with disease, and her dwelling loathsome from want, forget not that she has yet a sorrow which no human eye can reach. The remembrance of a mispent life has broke her heart; and though she send forth no plain-

tive voice, and though she shed no idle tear, she is mastered by an unknown spirit within, and sinks sadly down to her long, and lasting home.

To such scenes as these, sound policy, and genuine piety, unite to call your attention; to educate, to reclaim, to diffuse morality and religion, is the most comprehensive wisdom, and the truest philanthropy. If laws give efficacy to morals, morals give efficacy to laws; and it is rather, perhaps, in the disposition to obey, than in the power

to enact, that the security for human happiness consists.

The number of these deluded women is so great, and their sufferings, in process of time, so lamentable, that, considered by themselves, they become an object of political interference, and Christian compassion; considered as to its general effects, the increase or diminution of this species of profligacy, becomes of the highest civil importance. Who, then, shall set bounds to those labours which go to increase the sum of virtue in

a state? or who shall assign the precise limits where the work of reformation shall stop, and the bad be abandoned? If education has been tried in vain, we will set to work the great engine, of repentance, which rests upon experience, and model afresh the human mind softened by affliction. The fears of mankind are in general resorted to, rather than their ductility; and it is more common to punish than reclaim: A supposed necessity alone can justify this rough amelioration of mankind; but the voluntary labours of the truly good and re-

spectable men who preside over this Society, show you that no such necessity exists, and deserve your warmest protection, as they substitute for severity, persuasion, and effect the purest end by the gentlest means.

The great attention which has always been paid to reconcile reclaimed children to their parents, is a very pleasing feature in the conduct of this charity. The protection, and countenance of the parent gives stability to the new virtue of the child ; and the renewal

of this endearing relation is strictly congenial to our most lively feelings.

A young female was received some time since into the Society, who, in consequence of the infamous character she had incurred, had been wholly abandoned by her poor, but respectable parents, for above four years. You all know the extreme care with which the poor people attend to the religious, and moral education of their children in this part of the world; and will, I am sure, in the good-

ness of your hearts, anticipate the feelings of two poor villagers as they speculated on the future prospects of their late beloved inmate, their fears for her safety, their humble ambition, their hope that they had not in vain suffered want for her improvement, their ardent prayer to Almighty God for their child. Not to dwell upon intermediate scenes, by the interference of the Society, the father agreed to receive his daughter, and they were brought together; the appearance of each just before they met, was wonderfully impressive.

In the child there were marks of the deepest contrition, and humility ; a sense of joy, at the idea of seeing her father, mingled with a perturbation which bordered on delirious wildness. In the poor man there was an honest shame at the disgrace which his daughter had incurred, not wholly devoid of anger ; but it was easy to see how much his compassion ruled over every other feeling of his mind. Such was the interesting appearance of these poor people before they met ; but when they saw each other, there was no shame,

there was no dread, there was no anger, there was no contrition; but there were tears, and cries, and loud sobbings, and convulsive embraces, and the father wept over his daughter, and loved her; and they that saw this, bear witness how blessed a thing it is to snatch a human soul from perdition, to show the paths of God to poor sinners, and to shower down the glories of virtue, and religion on the last, and the lowest of mankind.

Will you then suffer me to plead

to you in vain, in such a cause as this? Will you suffer such a noble and rational charity to perish now at its birth? Will you turn back these half reclaimed women, when you have taught them the full measure of their sin, and wretchedness? Or, if a human being says to you, I am doing wrong; I am sinning against God, and man; I am wretched; I know not where to turn; pity me, and show me the paths of eternal life; will you drive back the penitent to her sins, and rage with all the severity of law, and censure, when you have

refused the benefit of preventive instruction?

I could speak to you for hours on this charity; but I have the firmest reliance on that rational goodness, so characteristic of this country, and before which no true object of misery ever presented itself in vain. Let me beg of you to take the nature, and views of this Society into your most serious consideration, and only to promote them as in your cool judgment you shall deem them important to the interest of true religion, and

social order, and functioned, as I most firmly believe them to be, by every moral probability of success.

But do not trust to the faded impressions of representation : Scenes of moral improvement are always gratifying, and always instructive ; view with your own eyes the strict order, and decency which pervades this institution ; converse with the humble penitents, and hear what they will tell you of the horrors from which they have been rescued, of their present comfort, and their hopes of immortality revived. The

most delicate and amiable woman need not blush to countenance with her presence, this school of moral emendation : To be noticed by their superiors in rank, animates the exertions of these women, and lightens the task of reformation ; and there is something in the sight of living purity (such as it does often live in gentle, and gracious women), that makes the heart wiser, and better in an instant, than the most spirited harangues on the nature, and glowing descriptions of the excellence of virtue.

My fellow Christians, and my brothers, hear now my last words before you quit this solemn place, and return to the business, and bustle of the world : Half a century will scarce elapse, and every being here present will be dead ; new men, and new events will occupy the world, and the dreaded pit of oblivion will shut over us all. Is the thought of an hereafter dear to you ? Is it your care to meet the great God with good deeds ? Have pity then on these forlorn women ; for if you have no pity on them, they will speedily be for-

faken by all: lay up a sweet remembrance for the evil day; and know, that the best mediation with God Almighty, the Father, and his Son of mercy, and love, is the prayer of a human being whom you have saved from perdition.

ON THE PREDISPOSING CAUSES TO THE RE-
CEPTION OF REPUBLICAN OPINIONS.

PSALM vii. v. 14.

Behold he travaileth with mischief.

CANDID discussion is, perhaps, infinitely more rare, than those who decide by the mere appearance of things are inclined to believe. Except on questions of pure science, it is hardly possible to suppose the mind poised in a just equilibrium, and feeling, in the lively balance of reason, the weight of clashing

arguments and of contending systems. Early associations, present feelings, and future hopes, adulterate the best productions of human reason; and every pride, and every passion, can shroud itself in the garb of truth, and baffle the vigilance, and mock at the wisdom of man.

It is, then, a matter of sovereign necessity, before we decide on great, and momentous questions, which affect our own happiness, and the peace of the world, to make a wise, and virtuous pause,

and review, with an honest feverity, those peculiarities of disposition, situation, and education, which may communicate an unfair bias to the mind, and induce us to decide, not as the truth of things is, but as we are ourselves.

Upon these principles, I propose to examine the predisposing causes to republican opinions, and to endeavour to show, that such fatal notions proceed as frequently from motives of passion, and pride, as from cautious thought, and wide inquiry.

It has been often said, that the pulpit ought not to be the vehicle of politics. If by politics is meant the subordinate questions of politics, domestic, and foreign arrangements, and that science of the streets which every silly man pretends to know by intuition, unquestionably with these follies, the pulpit is wholly unconcerned : But when the preference between forms of government swells into a great moral, and religious question ; when the horrible crisis of the times is such, that a few more years may arm every needy murderer, and every meta-

physical fanatic, with weapons, and with theories, and the dreadful work of slaughter, and legislation may begin ; is this no theme for the pulpit ? Are individual, and minute questions in morals to be discussed in this place, and the great, and parent question, whether morality and religion shall exist in any shape, and under any modification, to be passed over ? Shall we stop to cry out on lesser evils, when every holy barrier is burst, when all the chains of passion are snapt in sunder, when every foul vice has broken from the tombs of hell, and stalks

over the earth in the broad face of noon?

It will be urged, perhaps, that I am attaching an imaginary, rather than a real evil; that the advocates for republicanism are so extremely few, and so perfectly inconsiderable, that they are hardly deserving of notice; and that Englishmen, taught by the dreadful example of France, have abandoned their crude admiration of revolutions, and rallied round their government, their laws, and their king.

There is something so pleasing in this supposition, that I most cordially wish it were in my power to accede to it; but alas! silence is not conviction: there are, I dread, many men on whom the decided temper of the times has forced a face of acquiescence, who are only waiting for a moment of public misfortune to recoil upon their country, and glut a passion for change, and for destruction, which has become doubly terrible from the cravings of resentment, and the fury of restraint. There are diseases which never strive with the

firm flesh, and healthy blood, but wait for the emaciation, and adversity of the body, that they may rush in, and embitter the bitterness, and quicken the swiftness of death.

At the same time, I am well aware, there are many men of admirable talents, and approved integrity, who have unjustly incurred the charge of republicanism; who have understandings too comprehensive not to ridicule the follies, and hearts too good not to shudder at the enormities of such a system. But the real fact is, the

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mas of mankind have been so thoroughly alarmed by the progress of this evil, and the total subversion of all human happiness has been so imminently threatened, and so nearly accomplished, that the feelings of the public on this subject ought not only to be excused, but respected. It is hardly sufficient now, that men should not be actuated by this motive; but they should not, by an inattention to forms, and decencies, expose themselves to the imputation. Every worthy member of the community ought to sacrifice the pride

of understanding, the contempt of minutiae, and the impatience of restraint, to the consideration of the arduous, and sacred contest in which we are engaged.

Much is said about liberality ; and it is truly to be wished, that the activity which suppresses a great evil, were more compatible with that cool discrimination which accurately marks its confines. But candour is the offspring of peace, and security, and is nearly allied to indifference ; mankind must be roused to guard against such an

evil; and when the powerful agents of hope and fear are in full motion, the tranquil virtues are soon put to flight. But the same overheated imagination which magnifies a danger, guards against it more effectually; the jealousy which detects treason where it never existed, defeats it where it really is in force; and this suspicion, so much complained of, though it be the cause of particular inquietude, is the great source of public salvation. It is easy to join in a romantic wish for the greater diffusion of philosophy; but, constituted as men are,

we must take the good with the appendant bad ; and if we owe our protection to the virtue, we must not quarrel with the fault.

There lie at the bottom of all vast communities, a numerous sect of men, of open, or disguised poverty, who have lost in the sink of pleasure, fortune, and fame, and quenched every particle of God in voluptuous enormities, and crimes; base, bad men, who prey upon industry, and hate virtue; who would tear down the decencies, and pollute the innocence of life, that they

might make mankind as wretched as themselves, and spread the horror of ungoverned passions, and unqualified indulgence. Here is the first nucleus of all revolutions : it matters not whether the object be to enslave the people, or to free them ; to give them up to another's tyranny, or to the more cruel dominion of their own folly ; to establish a despotism, or a democracy. In all revolutions there is plunder, and change ; and here are the hordes of assassins, and robbers, the tools of political violence, tutored by their ancient pleasures,

and their present distress, to callous inhumanity, and boundless rapine. This source of republicanism needs but very little comment; the cure of such an evil falls under that general law of self defence, by which we crush a venomous reptile, or slaughter a beast of prey. No other argument can here be of the smallest importance, but the argument of brute force, and determined opposition.

The misfortune is, the evil has crept in amongst men of education, of sound moral character, and

unimpeached in the various relations of life ; men of personal bravery, and plausible talents, who command a considerable share of individual respect, and impress more by what they are, than by what they say ; and who add all the force of character to the bitterness of eternal invective, and unqualified assertion.

Upon the subject of republicanism itself, I do not mean to offer any thing. This topic has been so thoroughly sifted, that it would be useless, and tiresome, to attempt

to throw any new light upon it. I concern myself only with those causes which predispose the mind to the reception of such extravagant opinions.

Amongst these, one of the most common is vanity : A young man in some of the higher professions, becomes fluent in technical phrases, and skilful in technical business ; he acquires some degree of consideration in the little technical circle in which he lives, and tastes, for the first time, the sweets of distinction, and praise : instantly he

becomes to himself a creature of unlimited importance, a concealed treasure ; and careless of that partial pre-eminence, which he considers so much less than his real right, he paints to himself listening senates, and applauding people ; and is an orator, a demagogue, and a statesman.

It may seem trifling to attribute so great a crime to so light a vanity ; but if we were to trace the origin of republican opinions in many individuals, before they were fixed by habit, and opposition, I

believe we should not unfrequently find, they have proceeded from a talent for fluent speaking. Men lean to that political system which they think most favourable to their peculiar powers; and no two ideas are more inseparably united than democracy, and eloquence. In the first half of life, vanity in all its various shapes is unquestionably the great moving passion; and it is, perhaps, in the first half of life that these ideas more peculiarly prevail. As a man multiplies his relations, and takes a firmer root in society, as he assumes the new

characters of father, and husband, and as the real business of the world crowds upon him, he becomes more practical; the follies, like the beauties of his youth, fade away, and the soul's dark mansion lets in new light through the openings which time has made.

It would seem also, that the science of government is an unappropriated region in the universe of knowledge. Those sciences with which the passions can never interfere, are considered to be attainable only by study, and by reflec-

tions; while there are not many young men who doubt of their ability to make a constitution, or to govern a kingdom. At the same time, there cannot, perhaps, be a more decided proof of a superficial understanding, than the depreciation of those difficulties which are inseparable from the science of government. To know well the local, and the natural man; to track the silent march of human affairs; to seize, with happy intuition, on those great laws which regulate the prosperity of empires; to reconcile principles to circumstances, and be

no wiser than the times will permit ; to anticipate the effects of every speculation upon the entangled relations, and awkward complexity of real life ; and to follow out the magnificent theorems of the senate to the daily comforts of the cottage ; is a task which they will fear most, who know it best ; a task in which the great, and the good have failed, and which it is not only wise, but pious, and just in common men to avoid.

There is a malignity of disposition, favourable to the reception of

republican opinions, a weariness of the general content, a disgust at the diffusion of happiness, and a desire to forget internal vexation, by the sight of a contagious, and epidemic misery. In a different temperament, this predisposing cause is a love of turbulence, an impatience of every thing tranquil, and a horror of stagnant serenity, and insipid content.

Many people who are conscious, and justly conscious, of merit, are disposed to the reception of republican opinions, from finding

themselves neglected by their superiors in rank and reputation. Every man is desirous of rising in life, and ambitious of connecting himself in the most eligible manner. The world unfortunately measure by one scale, and the individual by another; and disappointment is always attributed to the injustice of those who confer reputation, rather than the overrated pretensions of him who seeks it. In this way, the natural discontent of inferiority slides into republicanism, that great modern epidemic, which stands ready for every un-

healthy appearance of the mind, and swallows up all inferior taint in its own sovereign malignity, and despotic contagion.

It is natural to every man to wish for distinction; and the praise of those, who can confer honour by their praise, is, in spite of all false philosophy, sweet to every human heart: But as eminence can but be the lot of a few, patience of obscurity is a duty which we owe not more to our own happiness, than to the quiet of the world at large. Give a loose, if you are young, and

ambitious, to that spirit which throbs within you ; measure yourself with your equals ; and learn, from frequent competition, the place which nature has allotted to you ; make of it no mean battle, but strive hard ; strengthen thy soul to the search of truth, and follow that spectre of excellence which beckons thee on beyond the walls of the world, to something better than man has yet done : It may be, thou shalt burst out into light, and glory, at the last : but if frequent failure convince you of that mediocrity of nature which is incompatible with

great actions, submit wisely, and cheerfully to your lot : Let no spirit of revenge tempt you to throw off your loyalty to mankind ; and to prefer a vicious celebrity to obscurity crowned with piety, and virtue. If you can throw new light upon moral truth, or by any exertions multiply the comforts, or confirm the happiness of mankind, this same guides you to the true ends of your nature : But, in the name of God, as you tremble at retributive justice, and in the name of mankind, if mankind are dear to you, seek not that easy, and ac-

curfed fame which is gathered in the work of revolutions, and deem it better to be for ever unknown, than to found a momentary name upon the bafis of anarchy, and irreligion.

There is a wearifome, and fickly affectation of feeling, favourable to the reception of republican opinions. There are men, by whom the people are fpoken of in terms of the warmeft compaffion, to whom government conveys no other notion than that of a vaft confpiracy againft human happinefs, and in

whose minds the different orders of society are considered to be in a state of essential hostility against each other. A poor man is necessarily an oppressed man, and a rich man necessarily a tyrant ; and the day of political salvation is looked for, when the vallies are to be exalted, and the hills laid low, the crooked rendered straight, and the rough places plain.

Besides all these causes which I have specified, and many more which I might specify, if the time allotted to a sermon would permit,

there is one of much greater importance than all, I mean the universal tendency amongst men of education to call every received opinion into question. This is no longer a bias of talents, or disposition, in particular individuals; but as I have before observed, it is a fashion among men of letters, so that the antiquity of an opinion, is as fatal a source of objection now, as its novelty was formerly; and that any system, moral, religious, or political, has been handed down to us with the accumulated praise of many generations, is quite a suffi-

cient reason why it should be received with prejudice, and contempt. Formerly, mankind built upon the truth that preceding ages had laid down, and there was progression. Now, every man who studies, prides himself upon believing nothing till he has proved it, and totally rejects the influence of authority : the consequence is, that as the few years of life fit for vigorous thought are perpetually broke in upon by the necessary business of the world, and as most people are never fit for vigorous thought at all, the better half of

reading men pass their lives in a state of the most pernicious scepticism, upon all received opinions of politics, religion, morals, and every other important consideration of life whatsoever.

It is, I am afraid, from great evils alone that great improvements are made; and in another half century, perhaps, when mankind have learned the practical miseries of this system of thinking, and seen atheism, and anarchy diffused among those whom they never meant it to reach, then, and not till then, will

the world revert to more sober habits of investigation, and inquiry.

In the mean time, what evils are in preparation for us, what we are doomed to see, and to suffer, it is painful, and difficult to conceive. Upon the success of the contest which we are now carrying on, depends, perhaps, the tremendous question, whether Europe shall, or shall not be visited by a long period of political struggles, and liberal arts, domestic happiness, and rational piety, be forgotten, and destroyed in the sorrows, and the fury

of revolutions. Our feelings are just now a little blunted from the long continuation of the danger; but no man can seriously turn his eyes to the position of the world, without being sensible, that till this great gulph be passed over, every hope of honest ambition, every wish for repose, every feeling which warms the heart, may be but a new cause of misery and despair.

From all these evils, may the solid understanding, and watchful courage of the country at large, guided, and blessed by the provi-

dence of God, protect, and defend us; and may he shelter, with his almighty power, a humane, a generous, and an ancient people, who may now, perhaps, be the first to check mankind in the *abuse*, as they were the first to rouse them to the *use* of their power, their reason, and their rights.

UPON THE BEST MODE OF CHARITY.

DEUTERONOMY, chap. xv. v. 11.

For the poor shall never cease out of the land. Therefore, I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in the land.

I do not propose to myself so very comprehensive a subject as that of a general exhortation to charity; but presupposing a due disposition in the minds of my audience to relieve the wants of their fellow-

creatures, I shall take the liberty of suggesting a few remarks upon the proper direction, and just government of this amiable virtue.

It is of importance, not only that we should do good, but that we should do it in the best manner. A little judgment, and a little reflection added to the gift, doubles its value; we exalt philanthropy, by making it useful, and we dignify benevolence by founding it on reason.

Mankind can never be too

strongly, or too frequently cautioned against self-deception. If a state of vice be a state of misery, a state of vice of which we are ignorant is doubly so, from the increased probability of its duration. It is surprising how many men are cheated by flighty sentiments of humanity into a belief that they are humane ; how frequently charitable words are mistaken for charitable deeds, and a beautiful picture of misery for an effectual relief of it. There are many who have tears for the chaste, and classical sorrow of the stage, who have

never submitted to go into the poor man's cottage to hear his tedious narrative, and to come close at hand with poverty, and its dismal, and disgusting attendants. Pure moral misery wrought up into an artful tale, is a luxurious banquet for the refined mind, which would turn away from the gross unhappiness of real life, where the low, and the ludicrous are mingled with the sad, where our delicacy is offended, while our feelings are roused, and we are reminded, not only of the misfortunes, but of the infirmities of man.

A state of delicate sensibility in the moral feelings is commendable or blame-worthy, according to the consequences to which it leads. If strong impressions of human misery rouse us to the relief of it, they are faithful monitors to virtue, and cannot be too effectually preserved; but if feelings are mere feelings, and do not stimulate us to action, they can answer no other purpose than to display ostentatious softness, or inflict useless suffering.

If men indulge in speculations,

far above the level of real life, the danger is, that they become unfit for action. Who can bear the muddy pool, and the barren sand of the desert, after he has gazed on the beautiful prodigies of a fancy landscape? And if we have drawn romantic notions of misfortune, and annexed to it, the ideas of venerable, simple, docile, and grateful, we shall soon get disgusted with the practice of charity, and fly back to the reveries of speculative benevolence, as an asylum from the disappointments we meet with

in the world, as it is really constituted.

The most important point in the administration of charity, is a proper choice of the object we relieve. To give promiscuously is better, perhaps, than not to give at all : but suppose each person, who is in a situation of life to relieve the wants of his fellow-creatures, were, instead of running the chance of encouraging imposture, to discover some worthy family struggling up against the world ; some poor widow, left with her helpless chil-

dren ; old people incapable of labour, or orphans destitute of protection, and advice ; suppose they were gradually to attach themselves to such real objects of compassion, to learn their wants, to stimulate their industry, and to correct their vices ; surely these two species of charity are not to be compared together in the utility, or in the extent of their effects ; in the benevolence they evince, or in the merits they confer. If you wish to gratify the feelings, or avoid the reproaches of your heart, with as little trouble to yourself as possi-

ble, you may lavish your bounty upon the first object you meet, without knowing if you are gratifying vice, or relieving want. This is a kind of middle course, which, though it fall far short of the dignity of virtue, keeps up a sort of comfortable delusion, and reconciles us pretty well to ourselves.

Whereas, he who is charitable, not from constitutional feelings, but from a wide, strong, and imperative sense of duty, will remember, that he owes to the poor, not only that which he gives, but he

owes to them the happy application, and judicious distribution of the gift; he owes to them a certain portion of his time, and intelligence; the exercise of that influence which education, wealth, and manners always have, and always ought to have, upon the lower orders of mankind. This is the steady, enlightened compassion of an ample mind, and a good heart; this is that vigilant, and wise benevolence, which makes happy cottages, and smiling villages, and fills the spirit of a just man with unspeakable delight.

This patronage, or adoption of the indigent, places the poor under the critical inspection of their superiors ; it blends those who want controul, with those who can exercise it ; it gives to the rich a taste for doing good ; to the poor, a love, and veneration for rank, and power, diffuses civilization, and has a wonderful effect in promoting good order, and general improvement.]

Those who have taken notice of the very striking difference between such villages in the country, where the poor are deserted by their na-

tural guides, and leaders, and those where they have some truly good model to look up to, will, I am sure, need no other proof of the justice of these remarks.

The true reason why this species of charity is so rarely practised, is, that we are afraid of imposing such a severe task upon our indolence ; though, in truth, all these kind of difficulties are extremely over-rated. When once we have made an acquaintance with a poor family, and got into a regular train of seeing them at intervals, the trouble

is hardly felt, and the time scarcely missed. Yet, after all, what is this madness of men? Let us omit all mention of pleasure; but, shall we lay out a whole life in the acquisition of knowledge, in the pursuit of competence, and wealth? Shall we pawn our souls to party, and to ambition, and grudge those few moments which we give up to solid deeds of virtue, the only deeds we shall look back on with pleasure, when old age, and death near at hand, show us the world in another, and in a true light? Can we find leisure for all

the intricacies of business, and science, and no leisure to reconcile the man to his own heart? And shall we go to our grave, knowing all wisdom but the best? "If," says Job, in the midst of his afflictions,

" if I have withheld the poor from
 " their desire, or have caused the eyes
 " of the widow to fail, or have eat-
 " en my morsel alone, and the father-
 " less hath not eaten thereof: If I
 " have seen any perish for want of
 " covering, or any poor without cloth-
 " ing; if his loins have not blessed
 " me, and if he were not warmed
 " with the fleece of my sheep: If I

*" have lifted up my arm against the
 " fatherless, when I saw my help in
 " the gate ; then let mine arm be
 " broken from the bone, and let it
 " fall from my shoulder blade."*

In talking of the various modes of charity, and the best manner of carrying our benevolent plans into execution, I wish to lay a particular stress upon visiting the poor in person. He who only knows the miseries of mankind at second hand, and by description, has but a faint idea of what is really suffered in the world. As much is done, both

here and in England by the laws and magistrates for the relief of the poor, as laws, and magistrates can well do; but these exertions can never remedy the evils to which they are directed, if they are not seconded by the charitable labours of individuals. Do not therefore stifle the first emotions of pity, and spare yourselves from a belief that the poor are well enough taken care of by the civil power, and that individual interference is superfluous. Many a hand is held up, and no man seeth it; many a groan is wasted in the air; many

die in secret, and, like the moments of the day, they perish, and are forgot.

Forgive me if I digress, to relate to you a little at length, a most dreadful scene of distress, to which I myself was a witness some years ago in the metropolis.

It was in a severe winter, when it pleased Almighty God, to visit us with the twofold evils of scarcity, and cold, I happened, by the purest accident in the world, to visit a family, which was in the last

stage of human wretchedness. They consisted of a man, his wife, and three children. I found the man in the last state of a consumptive complaint, and apparently little distant from his grave. The three children were not uninteresting, but they were neglected, and sickly ; and I learned from the most solemn assurance of the father, that they had not eaten one morsel of bread for that whole day. The mother was a spectacle which would have moved the most unfeeling man on earth ; she was in a state of complete phrensy ; and it ap-

peared that had support, her incessant care of her husband, and the horror of her childrens wanting bread, had turned this poor creature's brain, and driven her to the threshold of death: the man, a plain, and honest man, was too far sunk in body, and spirit to give way to active grief; he talked of the hard labour he had gone through to support his family, and sighed for the strength of better days, which had crowned his board with plenty, and peace. All this you can conceive, and you can figure to yourselves the moving

fight of little children distressed for food, and their looks of sorrow, which always go to the soul, and speak a clearer language than the tongues of men. All this you can paint to yourselves; but you cannot paint to yourselves the sharp cries of the woman, and her looks of unspeakable anguish, and all that she raved for her children. Your ears do not ring with her voice; you cannot see her moaning, and weeping, while her spirit was bursting with cruel affliction, and no comfort could reach her. Oh God! your soul would have leapt

from its body to have looked on this poor wretch. You would have given a thousand lives to have saved her. On your bended knees you would have wearied Heaven for her salvation.—Go then, while good days are yet left to you,—go into the house of mourning, and, under the roof of affliction, mingle with the old, the wretched, and the sad; bow down thy spirit with them, and chasten thy soul with their sorrow; when thy feet sound on the threshold of her door, the widowed woman shall say, there is bread for us to-day; and her

children shall flock about thee, and thou shalt be to them as a god; and ancient people shall have joy in their last days because of thee; and thy mind shall be moved within thee; and the bread, and estate of the poor, and oppressed, shall be precious in thine eyes.

A want of charity is not always to be attributed to a want of compassion: The seeds of this virtue are too deeply fixed in the human constitution, to be easily eradicated: but the appeal to this class of feelings is not sufficiently strong; men

do not put themselves into situations where they are liable to be called forth; they judge of the misfortunes of the poor through the medium of the understanding, not from the lively, and ardent pictures of sensation. We feel, it may be said, the eloquence of description; but what is all the eloquence of art, to that mighty, and original eloquence with which nature pleads her cause; to the eloquence of pain, and of hunger; to the eloquence of sickness, and of wounds; to the eloquence of extreme old age, of helpless infancy,

of friendless want. What persuasives like the melancholy appearance of nature badly supported, and that fixed look of sadness, which a long struggle with misfortune rivets on the human countenance. What pleadings so powerful as the rags and wretched hovels of the poor, and the whole system of their comfortless economy. These are the moments in which the world and its follies are forgot, which throw the mind into a new attitude of solemn thought, which have rescued many a human being from dissipation and crime,

which have given birth to many admirable characters, and multiplied more than all moral exhortation, the friends of man, and the children of God.

In truth, if these observations are any where applicable or necessary, it is in great cities that they are peculiarly so; for as misery increases with vice, and dissipation extinguishes charity, the poor suffer more, and meet with less relief, at least with less of that kind of relief which proceeds from the exertions, and interference of indi-

viduals. Far be it from me, in talking of the dissipation of great cities, to wage war with the innocent pleasures of life ; with youth there should be joy, for the best days of life are soon fled ; but the danger is, that amidst the constant enjoyments and diversions of society, the heart should become callous, and lose that noble irritability, that moral life, which is the parent of all that is good in the world. Enchanting as the pleasures of society appear, they would still derive an additional charm from the consciousness that you deserved to en-

joy them, that you had acquired a right to be happy, from having made others so; and that an evening of innocent gaiety, was earned by a morning of virtuous exertions.

You are not, I hope, of opinion, that these kind of cares devolve upon the clergy alone, as the necessary labours of their profession. Those who teach Christianity ought certainly to be most forward in every Christian exertion; but unquestionably it is not from them alone, that these exertions are ex-

pected, but from every one whose faith teaches, and whose fortune enables him to be humane. I have touched on this point, because such an opinion, though too absurd to be openly avowed, is not too absurd for that crude, and hasty palliation, with which we smother the conscience that we cannot satisfy.

I have only to beg your attention to this one remark, with which I shall conclude. Let us always remember that every charity is short lived, and inefficacious, which flows from any other motive than

the right. There is a charity which is meant to excite the feelings of gratitude ; but this will meet with its termination in its disappointment. There is a charity which flows from the romantic fiction of humble virtue, and innocence in distress ; but this will be soon disgusted by low artifice, and scared by brutal vice. The charity which proceeds from ostentation, can exist no longer than when its motives remain undetected. That charity alone endures, which flows from a sense of duty, and a hope in God. This is the charity

that treads in secret those paths of misery, from which all but the low-est of human wretches have fled. This is that charity which no labour can weary, no ingratitude detach, no horrors disgust, that toils, that pardons, that suffers, that is seen by no man, and honoured by no man, but (like the great laws of nature, does the work of God in silence), and looks to future, and to better worlds for its reward.

ON THE CONVERSION OF
ST. PAUL,

ACTS, chap. ix. v. 20. 21.

And straightway he preached Christ in the
synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

But all that heard him were amazed, and
said, Is not this he that destroyed them
which called on this name in Jerusalem.

OF all the arguments dwelt on
for the defence of Christianity,
none have been more forcibly, or
successfully urged than the con-
version of St. Paul; and it certain-
ly is a circumstance which cannot

well be explained without the supposition of something improbable, or the belief of something miraculous.

To that bigoted scepticism which professes to correct the errors of Christianity without reasoning itself, it can be of little use to address any argument. Every plea is useless where the question is prejudged. Reason has no gripe upon philosophical, any more than on religious fanaticism. The man who sets out with a predetermination to find Christianity fabulous, and

invented, will resist, not only the conversion of St. Paul, but would resist, perhaps, the very miracle itself which produced his conversion.

The language which an advocate for Christianity ought to hold with a sceptic, appears to be this :

“ I am endeavouring to prove to
 “ you, that those hopes of immor-
 “ tality which so many great men
 “ have seen afar off, in the doubt-
 “ ful light of human reason, have
 “ been made certain by the reli-
 “ gion of Christ. I am endeavour-
 “ ing to show you, that a system

“ of practical benevolence, better
 “ than the world has ever yet
 “ known, has sprung from this
 “ high source ; that you yourself
 “ are to be eternally happy here-
 “ after, if you will increase the
 “ happiness of your fellow-crea-
 “ tures here ; and that the price
 “ of immortality is benevolence.
 “ With these intentions, and these
 “ doctrines, I have a right to your
 “ serious attention. I have a right
 “ to that manly candour, which
 “ crushes at once every little gra-
 “ tification of vanity, or prejudice,
 “ incompatible with truth ; that

“ deems it more shameful to per-
 “ severe in an error than to ac-
 “ knowledge it ; and follows with
 “ proud obedience (wherever they
 “ may lead), the guiding footsteps
 “ of reason.”

Whoever examines the conver-
 sion of St. Paul in the frame and
 temper of mind here required,
 will meet, perhaps, with something
 that will stagger his infidelity, mo-
 derate his contempt for Christiani-
 ty, and induce him to review, and
 recall his decided conviction of
 its spurious origin.

The treatment which Christ, his disciples, and converts, experienced from the Jews, would, if other proofs were wanting, sufficiently convince us of the tenacious adhesion of that people to the religion of their ancestors, and how soon their watchful jealousy on this subject would break out into cruel persecution. The Romans, and the Athenians were, upon the whole, not only tolerant, but careless in matters of religion : Poets vilified their gods in the immoral actions, which they ascribed to them ; philosophers denied their existence ; co-

medians ridiculed them upon the stage ; the priests continued to sacrifice ; and the government was content. But the religion of the Jews was deeply fixed, and eagerly defended. God had singled out the Jews from the whole earth, as the people of his providence, and protection, had poured forth on the children of Israel a flood of light, which separated them entirely from the darkened hemisphere of the Pagans. They were proudly mindful of this distinction ; studied their whole law, with active investigation, and defended it with ardent

zeal. Profelytism, therefore, effected amongst a people of this description, is certainly more important as to the proof it affords, than any ordinary conversion from one religion to another. The stronger the resistance, the greater force must overcome it. Prejudices so deeply imbibed, no common power can eradicate.

In the xxii. chap. Acts of the Apostles, Paul, in declaring his conversion, thus describes himself:
 " I am verily a man which am a
 " Jew, born in Tarsus, and was

“ brought up at the feet of Gama-
 “ liel, and taught according to the
 “ perfect manner of the law of the
 “ fathers, and was zealous towards
 “ God, as ye all are this day.”

Paul, therefore, appears to have been a man thoroughly conversant in the Jewish law. The opinions of his nation were confirmed by the tenor of his education; and belief in him was not merely a popular opinion, caught from living with a multitude who were of the same creed, but an extended system, disciplined by regular learning, and

defended with scholastic acuteness. The pride of the scholar was added to the bigotry of the Jew, and he would resist conviction, from intellectual vanity, as well as from religious faith; and the former motive, perhaps, would not have been the least weak of the two.

If Paul had remained quiet at the first propagation of Christianity; if he had taken no active part at this interesting epoch; if he had viewed its progress with indifference; if he had suspended his conviction till the sensation of no-

velty, too active for reason, had subsided, and left him to the free exercise of his understanding, we could not have been so much surprised that the result should terminate in his conversion ; but, from the first appearance of Christianity, he was its decided foe ; at the first dawn of this new light, he rose up in bitterness, and anger, to extinguish it, and bore witness to Judea that it was from men, and not from God.

In the above mentioned chapter, Paul says, " I persecuted this way,

" unto the death, binding and de-
 " livering into prisons both men,
 " and women. As also the high
 " priest doth bear me witness, and
 " the estate of the elders; from
 " whom I received letters unto the
 " brethren, and went to Damascus,
 " to bring them which were bound
 " into Jerusalem, for to be punish-
 " ed."

And yet this is he whom bondage
 could not make less zealous, who,
 under all modes of misfortune, and
 in every species of sorrow, remain-
 ed in stedfast faith, and immove-

able conviction; who, with that high principled courage which always keeps fortune beneath its feet, and rises superior to every event, boldly preached from the midst of guards, and swords, and chains, the truths of the gospel; truths, which shook the heart of Felix with fear, and drove Agrippa to the brink of conversion. And is there nothing in this speaking fact, which comes home to the bosom of men? Nothing which can repress the confidence of infidelity, or break the slumber of indifference? Can we see enmity turned to protection;

the bitterness of persecution exchanged for the zeal of friendship ; the whole tenor of character, and every inveterate feeling, undergo such radical conversion ; without wondering how these things might be, without pondering on this curious evidence, and working up our faculties, to the eager examination of the most awful question that can engage the wit of man ?

After this general sketch of his life, which I have already quoted, Paul proceeds to state the particular circumstances of his conversion.

" Whereupon as I went to Da-
 " mascus, with authority and com-
 " mission from the chief priests,
 " at mid-day, Oh King, I saw in
 " the way a light from heaven, a-
 " bove the brightness of the sun,
 " shining round about me, and
 " them which were with me. And
 " when we were all fallen to the
 " earth, I heard a voice from hea-
 " ven." And he then proceeds to
 relate the command he received
 from God, which is too well known
 to need quotation.

It would be impossible to attempt

a full, and satisfactory answer, to those who, in this place, would go to the general question, and object to all miracles at once, because such a very important subject merits an original inquiry, rather than a casual digression. But that question which has been often put, and never fairly answered, may be again repeated. Admit, that God governs the world by general laws, Where is the absurdity of supposing a particular exception to these laws, to answer a particular purpose of providence; of believing that he should enlighten the world by the mission

of Christ; or prove the authenticity of that divine mission by the conversion of St. Paul? Those who see marks of intelligence, and design in the creation of the world, must believe that there was a time when this intelligence, and design first began to operate; when it would give to matter modifications of existence, which till that time it had ever been without. And it is surely difficult to say, why God, after this first act of creative benevolence, should never revisit this wonder that he had left floating in the heavens, or why he should give up

its noblest tenant for ever to his weak reason, and his wild passions. Upon these principles, the idea of a miracle, far from implying any absurdity, seems to exalt our notions of the Deity, and changes a casual, and capricious bounty into a permanent, and imperishable benevolence.

But, to return from this digression to the particular question before us—It must follow, as an inevitable consequence, if this miracle be not true, that St. Paul deceived himself, or that he deceived other

people; that he was either a dupe, or an impostor.

We will *first* inquire, if it be probable that St. Paul endeavoured to impose on the world a miracle, in which he himself had not a thorough belief; and the obvious mode of beginning such an investigation, will be to examine into the motives which, under any rules by which the human character ought to be judged, could have influenced St. Paul to the commission of such a despicable fraud,

and implicated him in such a
shameless piece of hypocrisy.

I believe it may be laid down
as a general rule, that every man
will love that which is honourable,
and virtuous, where he can gain
nothing by perfidy, and vice. No
man is gratuitously bad; no man
covers himself with crimes from a
mere lust for disgrace, or an eager
relish for infamy. Self approba-
tion is not bartered for nothing;
every human being naturally loves
the praise of his own heart, and
the approbation of his fellow-crea-

tures ; and if he sells them, he sells them for some pleasure that is poignant, some gratification that is exquisite, something that will pay him for remorse.

Now, what possible motive could St. Paul have had, to sacrifice the consideration in which he was held by his countrymen, to expose himself to ridicule, and contempt, to persecution, and poverty, to the most extreme, and the most varied distress? Could the Christians hold out to him any magnificent temptations? Could they buy him by

the gorgeous allurements of honour, power, and opulence? Alas! what could the Christians give? Begging themselves for life, for bread, and compassion, flying to rocks, and caverns, not to conceal crimes, but to pray to the God of heaven, and earth, in truth, and spirit, What gilded hopes, and splendid promises could they hold out to mercenary talents, and venal ambition? The persecuted cannot protect; power is not in the gift of poverty; the indigent and afflicted have nothing to offer but a share in their misery. They could say to St. Paul, Be a

Christian as we are ; we have not, indeed, much of worldly honour to bestow ; but you may share our persecution ; you may become its most important subject, you may be the *protomartyr* of our sect ; you may be a more illustrious outcast, a more exalted victim, a more splendid exile, than has yet graced the annals of our misery ; you may live in sorrow, and die in torture. This must have been the language of Christian seduction, and these the irresistible temptations which worked upon St. Paul to prostitute his honour, and desert his religion ;

he must have submitted to be base, in order to be miserable; he must have waded through imposture to martyrdom, and thought no artifice too mean to encounter difficulty, and court persecution.

If St. Paul did not believe his own testimony, but was imposing on mankind, What evidence can we ever hear with confidence, and conviction? With him seems to rise or fall the credibility of all human assertions. Mere words we may, perhaps, mistrust: the sad knowledge of man's depravity may

justify us even in doubting of oaths, and balancing the probability against the solemnity of the assertion: but he who strengthens his testimony by his misfortunes, cannot be any longer suspected. He who is beaten, shipwrecked, and chained, cannot be considered as the martyr of obstinate fraud; he has washed off every stain of suspicion by his blood, and has shown, in the noble catalogue of his woes, the heroic patience of conviction, and the unshaken courage of truth.

Independent of these general

principles, there are many minute arguments which occur in reading the relation, to sanction the testimony of St. Paul. He says, when this circumstance happened, there was a company of men with him, and that he was blind for three days after. These circumstances laid open to the Jews a field for inquiry, and detection, which no adroit impostor, or indeed no impostor of common understanding, would expose himself to. A feigned miracle may as well happen in solitude as not; nor is there any reason why it should be

attended with personal inconvenience to him who witnesses it. Then again, if any considerations of policy had influenced his conduct, he would have softened the odium of apostacy, by the gradual dereliction of former connexions: But observe the singular circumstances of his conversion: he sets out for Damascus, an infidel, bloated with rage, and yearning for blood; his errand of death was a legal one; he bore with him the credentials of cruelty, which he had eagerly sought for, and easily obtained; he went forth the accredited minister of

Jewish revenge, their favourite assassin; he went forth, and the people shouted, and clapped their bloody hands. How did he arrive? With a heart softened by sorrow, and bursting with remorse; lowly, broken, and penitent; not the minister, but the object of revenge; preaching Christ, and lamenting with tears and sighs, the infatuation of his past days. This is the portentous fact which vouches so strongly for Christianity; here it is, if any where, that the finger of God is to be seen in our religion.

Let us now consider, if there be any reasons to believe that St. Paul was himself deceived, and that this miracle, instead of a real revelation, was nothing more than the phantasm of a deluded imagination.

If the character of St. Paul were such as to justify us in this supposition, and induce us to believe, that a mind too intensely employed, and too fervently heated, had lost all wholesome controul over the fancy; the difficulty is, to conceive why this self-created vision, did not rather model itself in conformity,

than in opposition to the whole former tenor of his words, and actions. If his miracle had spurred him on to new asperities, and fresh bitterness against the Christians, it would have accorded very well, with the usual history of fanaticism, and the extravagancies of his fancy would have preserved a certain affinity to his ordinary ideas. Madness does not reverse the notions which a mind in health intensely dwells upon, but points them, and gives them new vigour; it does not struggle against the tide of the conceptions, but hurries that tide on with fresh

impetuosity. St. Paul, a visionary, and a madman, would have hated the Christians worse, than in his sober mind : if not, I will venture to assert, that it is the only instance on record, where an enthusiastic supposition of intercourse with heaven has cured fanaticism, instead of increasing it ; and to suppose it, is to decide contrary to human experience, for the sole purpose of depreciating Christianity.

Is there, moreover, any thing in the character of St. Paul, when he became a Christian, that can war-

rant this imputation of fanatical derangement? Is a fanatic observant of times, and seasons? Does he bend this way and that way, in dexterous fluctuation with the little passions, and prejudices of men? The very strong feature of fanaticism, is a want of fine perception; an ungovernable and monotonous violence, totally unobservant of occasions: But St. Paul at Athens makes no mention of the gospel, or the new light, or Christ, or his disciples, or Moses, or the Jewish law; he addresses them in a strain of general, and exalted eloquence;

quotes their own poets in confirmation of his opinions; tells them he was come to make known to them that God, whom they ignorantly worshipped, and to show them clearly these attributes which they already adored in dark piety, and revered with unenlightened wonder. See how dexterously he avails himself of the state of parties in the Jewish synagogue! " Paul perceiving, that part were Sadducees, " and the other Pharisees, cried " out, I am a Pharisee. And when " he said so, there arose a diffen- " tion between the Pharisees, and

“ Sadducees, and the multitude
“ were divided.” How eloquently
and ably he pushes on the wavering
faith of Agrippa ! How he animates
that spark of Christianity which
begins to glow in his breast,
and himself kindles into sevenfold
eloquence, when the hope of reclaiming
this illustrious pagan flashes across
his mind ! “ King Agrippa,
“ believest thou the prophets. I
“ know that thou believest. And
“ Agrippa said, Thou almost persuadest
me to be a Christian.” Then said Paul,
“ I would to God,
“ that not only thou, but that all

“ who hear me this day, were as I
“ am, saving these bonds.”

Here then we will stop, and recapitulating, in a few simple words, the story we have told, make our stand for Christianity. At the first appearance of this religion, St. Paul declares himself its enemy, and becomes the bitter persecutor of its converts. He solicits, and obtains permission from the high priest to root it out. He on a sudden declares his belief in this heresy, fairly tells the Jews that he

had been converted by a miracle ; not only believes, but ardently propagates it ; and, in the course of his religious labours, exposes himself to every possible danger, and difficulty, that human nature can encounter,

The inferences we draw from this plain history are these—That that man cannot be insincere, who has suffered evils worse than death for what he believes to be the truth ; who, by a life of pain, and wandering, of anguish and labour, has

borne witness to the integrity of his faith : that that man cannot be a weak man, who has carried the arts of successful persuasion, through barbarous, and through civilized countries, and extorted from pagan pride, and pagan power, such splendid evidence of his cogent arguments, and his imposing eloquence. He is then a just man, and a wise man ; and as he is, let not his long labours, and his illustrious life, be lost upon us ; let him not plead, and suffer in vain ; let us finish (what Agrippa began) our convic-

tion; and when he reasons of temperance, and righteousness, and judgment to come, let us do more than Felix, not only tremble, but tremble and repent.

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